

The Russian Revolution



Pre-Revolutionary Russia



- Only true autocracy left in Europe
- No type of representative political institutions
- Nicholas II became tsar in 1884
- Believed he was the absolute ruler anointed by God
- Russo-Japanese War (1904) – defeat led to pol. instability

- conditions deteriorated, rev. became possible, esp. w/ Lenin's involvement
- he had gravitated towards the *Social Dem. Workers' Party* of *George Plekhanov* – they believed in dialectical materialism and thus favoured modernization/capitalism (which the czars also favoured as a measure to catch up w/ the w. Europe, esp. after the Crimean and Russo-Japanese Wars)



The Revolution of 1905



- **Rapid growth of (discontented) working class**
- **Vast majority of workers concentrated in St. Petersburg and Moscow**
- **Little help from the countryside:**
 - impoverished peasants – Populist Movements of the 1870s and later had done little to improve their lot**
 - **No individual land ownership**
 - **Rural Famine**

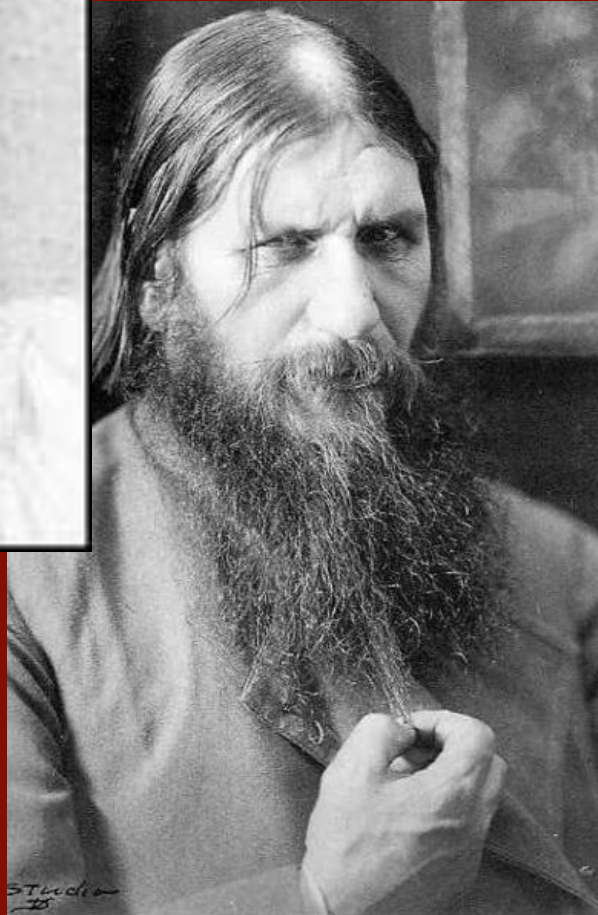


Conservatism Continues: 1905-1917



- Tsar paid no attention to the Duma; it was harassed and political parties suppressed – only token land reform was passed
- Nicholas was personally a very weak man; he became increasingly remote as a ruler
- Numerous **soviets** thus began to appear

Alexandra: The Power Behind the Throne



- Even more blindly committed to autocracy than her husband
- She was under the influence of Rasputin
- Origins of Rasputin's power - ?
- Scandals surrounding Rasputin served to discredit the monarchy

Alexis: Alexandra's Son with Hemophilia



World War I: “The Last Straw”

- War revealed the ineptitude and arrogance of the country's aristocratic elite
- Corrupt military leadership had contempt for ordinary Russian people
- Average peasants had very little invested in the War



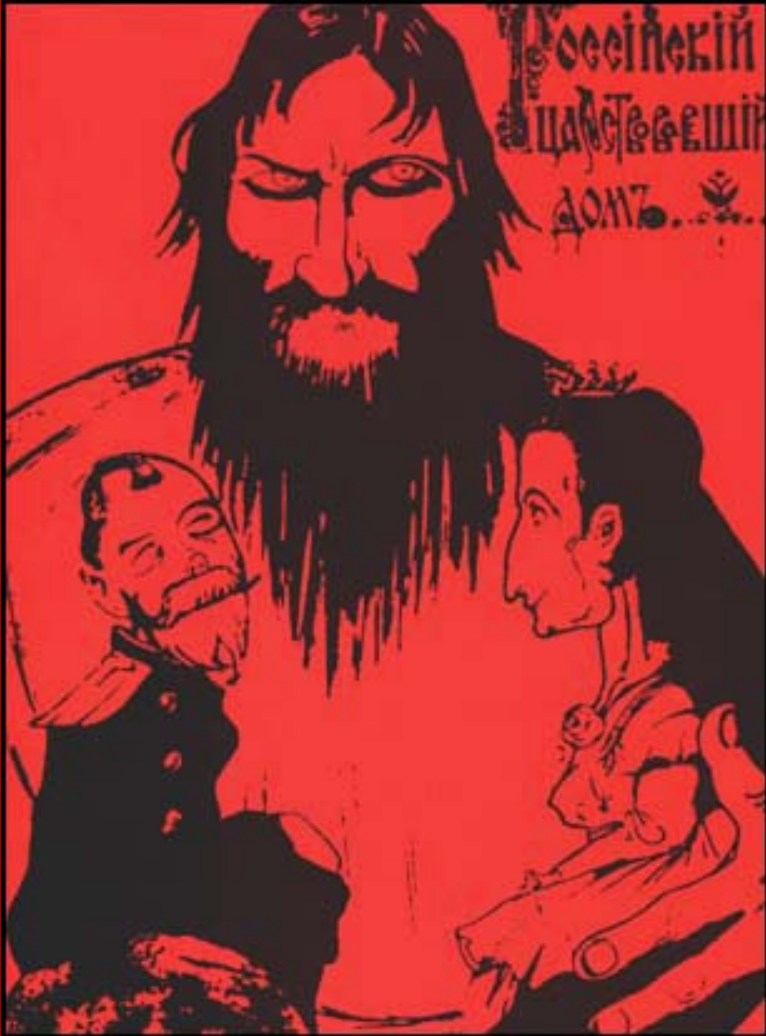
Abführung russischer Kriegsgefangener. An der Spitze ein 15jähriger russischer Kriegsfreiwilliger

World War I (cont)



- ill-trained, ineffective officers, poorly equipped (Russ. was not ready for ind. war) – the result was mass desertions and 2 million casualties by 1915
- Result: Chaos and Disintegration of the Russian Army
- Battle of Tannenberg (August, 1914) – massive defeat at hands of Hindenburg and Ger.

The Collapse of the Imperial Government



- Nicholas left for the Front—September, 1915
- Alexandra and Rasputin throw the government into chaos
- Alexandra and other high government officials accused of treason

The Collapse of the Imperial Government (cont)



- **Rasputin assassinated in December of 1916**
- **Complete mismanagement of the wartime economy**
- **ind. production plummeted, inflation and starvation were rampant, and the cities were overflowing w/ refugees**
- **they became a hotbed for pol. activism, and this was ignited by serious food shortages in March 1917, esp. in St. Petersburg**

The Two Revolutions of 1917



- The March Revolution (March 12)
- The November Revolution (November 6)

The March Revolution



- **Origins: Food riots/strikes**
- **Duma declared itself a Provisional Government on March 12**
- **Tsar ordered soldiers to intervene; instead they joined the rebellion...the Tsar thus abdicated on March 17**
- **the Menshevik Alexander Kerensky headed the Provisional Government, along w/ Prince Lvov**
 - **Very Popular Revolution**
 - **Kerensky favoured gradual socialist reform/ saw the war effort as #1 priority**

Kornilov Affair

- General Kornilov attempted to overthrow Provisional Government with military takeover
- To prevent this takeover, Kerensky freed many Bolshevik leaders from prison and supplied arms to many revolutionaries



The Petrograd Soviet



- leftists in St. Petersburg formed the Petrograd Soviet, which they claimed to be the legit. gov't
- Ger. was aware of the Russ. situation and began to concentrate on the W. Front
- Ger. even played a role in returning Lenin to Russia, so he could foment rev.
 - Having been granted "safe passage", Lenin returned in April 1917

Soviet Political Ideology



- More radical and revolutionary than the Provisional Government
- Most influenced by Marxist socialism
- Emulated western socialism
- Two Factions
 - “Mensheviks”
 - “Bolsheviks”

Founder of Bolshevism: Vladimir Lenin



- His Early Years
 - Exiled to Siberia in 1897
- Committed to Class Struggle and Revolution
- Moved to London in 1902 and befriended Leon Trotsky
- *What is to be Done?*
 - **vanguard** is required to lead the rev. (thus rev. from above)
 - this split the SDWP in 2

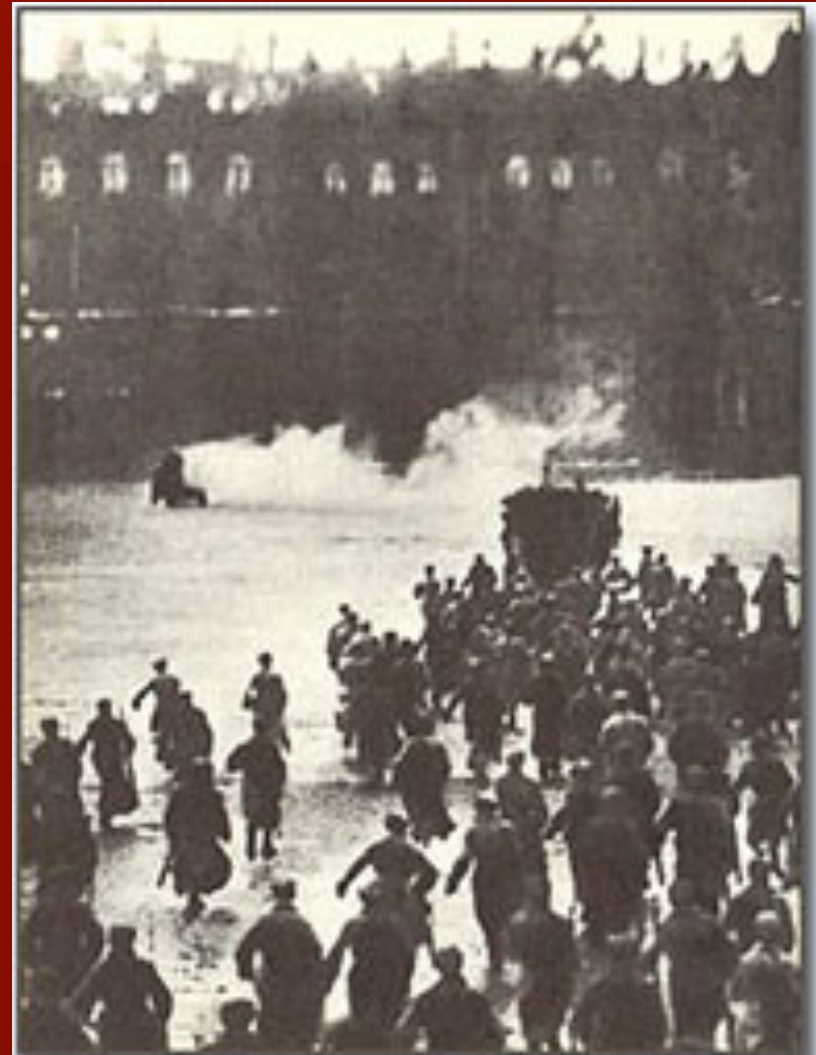
Lenin Steps into This Vacuum



- Amnesty granted to all political prisoners in March of 1917
- Lenin's arrival in Petrograd
- A tremendously charismatic personality
- "Peace, Land, Bread"
- "All Power to the Soviets"
- He preached that the war was a capitalist/imperialist war that offered no rewards for the peasants/workers; he also felt the war was over w/ the czar's abdication
- Bolshevik party membership exploded; their power was consolidated

- Lenin formed the ***Military-Revolutionary Council*** and in May 1917 he urged the Pet. Soviet to pass ***Army Order # 1***

– This gave control of the army to the common soldiers; discipline thus collapsed, and Kerensky was undermined



Petrograd, October 1917

The November Revolution



- Nov. 6, 1917...
- this was the ideological aspect of the rev., w/ the coup itself planned by **Leon Trotsky**, who had gained the confidence of the army (= the "Red Miracle")
- Lenin went on to consolidate his power in Jan. 1918 when he disbanded the *Constituent Assembly* (had replaced the Duma) – the Bolsheviks had not gained a majority there in late Nov. elections - Russ. dem. thus terminated → a **Council of People's Commissars** was created
- All private property was abolished and divided among the peasantry
- Largest industrial enterprises nationalized

November Revolution (cont)



- Political Police organized: **CHEKA**
- Revolutionary army created with Trotsky in charge = “Red Army”
- Bolshevik Party renamed Communist Party in March of 1918

November Revolution (cont)



- Lenin's 1st task was to get Russia out of the war so he could concentrate on internal reform...
- The **Treaty of Brest-Litovsk** negotiated with the Germans, giving them much Russian territory, population, and resources
- Civil War followed, 1917-1920
→ "Reds" versus "Whites"
- Complete breakdown of Russian economy and society

Interpreting the Russian Revolution



- The official Marxist interpretation
→ The importance of a permanent international revolution
- Function of Russian History and Culture
- Imposed Revolution on an unwilling victim
- A Social Revolution...

